

REMARKS

Currently, claims 1-8, 67-77, 79-86, 89-97, 101-110, 112-121, and 127-132 are pending in the above captioned application, including independent claims 1, 67, 101, 114, and 127.

In the Office Action, the pending claims were rejected under either 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) or 103(a) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,990,377 issued to Chen, et al. Chen, et al. discloses absorbent articles typically used in contact with skin, such as disposable diapers, feminine pads, panty liners, incontinence pads and the like. The absorbent articles are described as having a topsheet layer or liner next to the skin, an absorbent core beneath designed to retain liquid, and a **liquid impervious backsheet that prevents leakage** and maintains the integrity of the product. See Col. 1, Rows 23-29, emphasis added.

In stark contrast, independent claims 1, 67, and 114 of the present application require that the absorbent sponge-like product comprises an outer cover that **allows water to pass therethrough**, said compressible substrate being enclosed by the outer cover. Furthermore, independent claim 127 of the present application is directed toward a method of making a sponge-like pad. The method of claim 127 comprises enclosing the stack in a **liquid pervious cover**. Thus, Applicants submit that independent claims 67, 114, and 127 and all pending dependent claims are not anticipated by Chen, et al.

However, the Office Action continues to cite the teachings of Chen, et al., particularly Col. 36, ll. 64 to Col. 37, ll. 16, as anticipating the rejected claims. In this section of Chen, et al., two embodiments are disclosed. First, Chen, et al. states that the absorbent core can be "replaced by a series of resilient basesheet layers, such as the wet resilient uncreped, through-air-dried ("UCTAD") basesheets... and a dual-zoned

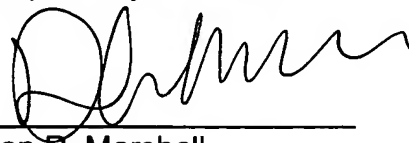
absorbent web containing hydrophobic material could be placed in superposed relation” on the series of resilient basesheet layers. Col. 36, line 64 - Col. 37, line 6. This embodiment of Chen, et al. is disclosed as capable of replacing the absorbent core utilized in an absorbent structure, which has a liquid impervious backsheet that prevents leakage. Nowhere does Chen, et al. disclose or even suggest, however, a compressible substrate being enclosed by an outer cover that allows water to pass therethrough.

Secondly, Chen, et al. discloses that a “hand towel” can be made from the uncreped, non-compressively dried basesheets. However, in this embodiment, no absorbent core is disclosed or even suggested. In this embodiment of Chen, et al., the hydrophilic fibers of the basesheet are utilized to absorb fluids. Applicants respectfully submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to add an absorbent core to a hand towel.

In view of the above, Applicants submit that the currently pending claims patentably define over Chen, et al. Examiner Stephens, however, is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned should she have any questions with respect to this response or if any other issues arise with respect to this application.

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Respectfully submitted,



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